DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 274 850 CE 045 244

AUTHOR Branyon, Sandra; Piotrowski, Chris
TITLE Evaluation of a Freshman Career Development Program.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 14p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Choice; *Career Development; Career Education; *Career Planning; *College Freshmen; Course Evaluation; Decision Making; Goal Orientation; Higher Education; Individual Needs; Library Skills; Needs Assessment; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Self Concept; Study Skills; Vocational Interests

ABSTRACT

A study evaluated the effectiveness of a career development program entitled Career and Life Planning, which is a two-semester required course for freshmen at the University of West Florida. The career planning format included study and library skills and self-knowledge. Other course focuses were exploration of personal needs, vocational interests, career goals, and realistic assessment of career choice. Upon completion of the first semester, 200 participants evaluated the course on 12 dimensions of program effectiveness. The freshmen assessed the course as quite helpful in overcoming problem areas such as study skills and student identity. Moreover, participants felt that the course clarified vocational objectives and prepared them for responsible career decision making. Although some sex differences were noted on course evaluation, these differences were found not to be significant. (Author/YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED274850

Evaluation of a Freshman Career Development Program

Sandra Branyon

Arizona State University

and

Chris Piotrowski

The University of West Florida

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Piotrowski

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Running head: CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

This study evaluated the effectiveness of a career development program for freshmen at a Southeastern university. The career planning format included study and library skills, self-knowledge, and also, focused on exploration of personal needs, vocational interest, career goals, and realistic assessment of career choice. Class participants (N = 200) evaluated the course upon completion of the semester on 12 dimensions of program effectiveness. The freshmen assessed the course as quite helpful in overcoming problem areas such as study skills and student identity. Moreover, participants felt that the course clarified vocational objectives and prepared them for responsible career decision-making. Although some sex differences were noted on course evaluation, these differences were found not to be significant.

Evaluation of a Freshman Career Development Program

In 1980, over 12 million students pursued degree credit in American colleges and universities. More recently, a Cooperative Institutional Research Program survey of 271,685 freshmen concluded:

> "In the area of personal values, the 1984-85 freshmen are more interested in making money than any other class in the history of the survey. All-time highs were reached in the percentages of students who say that a 'very important' reason for attending college is 'to make more money' (67.8 percent compared to 66.7 percent last year and 49.9 percent in 1971)" (American Council on Education and the Graduate School of Education at UCLA, 1984).

Due to the conflict between personal career aspirations and lucrative employment, a sizeable percentage of students are experiencing difficulties in relation to choice of major and eventual decisions about a constructive career path. In fact, according to a American College Testing Program survey of 40,654 freshmen, 46 percent expressed a need for assistance with educational and occupational plans (College Placement Council, 1985).

Career planning has usually focused on activities that aid students in acquiring knowledge, skills, and decision-making strategies necessary for effective career choice and subsequent life-long career development. However, translating the idea of career planning into effective action has been a perennial challenge for educators and, not surprisingly, positive outcomes have been difficult to achieve. Moreover, the professional literature has but sporadic reports on outcome studies (e.g., Cochran, Hetherington, & Strand, 1980; Keller, Mayfield, & Piotrowski, 1983). These educational and career needs have been extensively addressed in the recent Handbook on Student Development (Ware & Millard, 1986).

During the past decade, much attention has focused on career planning and development courses and programs. Appropriately, most programs and interventions stress self-awareness, occupational information, factors influencing the career decision process, and the development of job finding skills that enhance satisfactory employment. Unfortunately, these concerns are usually not realized until late in the student's college years. There is a critical need for effective career planning for incoming college students. In response to this need, a course has been developed at The University of West Florida (UWF) to teach beginning students how to choose an academic major and a career path based on their unique interests, skills, and aspirations.

Career and Life Planning (CLP) is a two-credit semester course required for all freshmen during their first semester at the university. CLP assists freshmen in getting off to a good start in college by emphasizing study skills, time management strategies, and a systematic approach for investigating academic and career opportunities. The goals of the course are that freshmen will:

1. understand the relationship between liberal learning and career and life planning;
2. develop the skills necessary for success at the university/college;
3. become familiar with the support services available to facilitate academic progress and promote personal development;
4. learn to develop an effective research strategy utilizing library reference materials;
5. clarify values, abilities, and interests;
6. clarify life goals based on self-awareness;
7. explore relationships among various career versus life goals;
8. investigate career fields through interviews with professionals; and
9. learn about career and life-span theories.

The present investigation reports on the evaluations of the CLP course at UWF by 200 freshmen students during the Fall of 1984. The results of the data were also analyzed for males and females since sex differences have been found to be an important influence on career issues (e.g., Hutt, 1983; Yamico, 1982).

Method

The participants in this study were all enrolled freshmen (N = 200) in the CLP course offered at UWF in the Fall of 1984. Upon completion of the course, the students completed a lengthy evaluation designed to elicit personal perceptions of the CLP course. Part I of the questionnaire focused on several demographic inquiries, which included the major field of student of each student. Part II included 12 evaluative statements about the program that were rated on a Likert type-scale.

Results

Fequency counts were calculated for the 12 evaluation questions to determine differences in course effectiveness for the total sample and by sex (see Table I); 69% of the sample responded favorably to the question "this course has increased my knowledge about student skills such as time management and study methods." Females rated the course more positively than males on this

dimension, although a Chi-square goodness of fit analysis proved insignificant. The sample had similar opinions about course objectives such as the acquisition of new knowledge about careers (Question 3), the attainment of knowledge about various career planning theories (Question 5), and lifelong learning issues (Question 7).

Insert Table I about here

This latter emphasis on acquisition of career choice strategies that could be applied throughout one's career was made rather salient by students' positive views that the course increased interest and knowledge about career and life planning in general (Question 9) and enhanced career exploration strategies in particular (Question 11). Student responses indicated that the learning experiences gained throughout the course went beyond career exploration and actually facilitated clarification of one's identity and self-concept (Question 8). Lastly, although Chi-square analyses were found to be insignificant, females evaluated the various content and benefits of the course somewhat more positively than males.

Discussion

Student evaluations of the introductory CLP course at UWF supported the course's effectiveness in achieving its overall objectives. In terms of course content, students felt that the format enabled them to overcome such problem areas as college orientation, self-discipline techniques, time management and effective study skills, and laid the groundwork for the generalization of their new found learnings to other academic life areas. In the interpersonal domain, course participants felt that they matured as students and as individuals due to the close, supporting relationships experienced through mentors and concerned faculty advisors. Also, exposure to "understanding" college administrators apparently lessened anxieties about the challenge of a college education and provided needed role models. Moreover, the course enhanced clarity of goals, interests, avenues to achievement, and career objectives. Students became aware of career planning strategies and opportunities, as well as the reality of job-market needs. Realistic ambitions and expectations were the likely outcome. Furthermore, vocational identity was paralleled by an increased awareness of ones' personal strengths and limitations. Such crystallization of self-concept not only enriched an awareness of self but also enhanced self-esteem. This maturational process led many students to feel that experiences

and knowledge gained throughout the course could be applied effectively to other life areas.

Of interest, only a small minority (15.8%) of students enrolled voluntarily in the CLP course. However, post-course evaluations indicated that the majority of students gained substantially from their experience. Curriculum planners should be encouraged that career planning programs are greatly appreciated by novice students. This experience, it would seem, gets many students "off on the right foot" and would appear to allay many anxieties that abound during the freshman year.

The findings of the present study demonstrate that novice students have a need for learning experiences in addition to standard career and job search skills. Students need to feel valued as unique individuals; thus, emphasis on self-knowledge, interest and value clarification, as well as appreciation of differences among individuals, enhance personal integrity and student development. Bartsch and Hackett (1979) found that personal career decision-making strategies enhanced student development.

The findings from the current study were also consistent with results from previous research on effectiveness of career development programs for freshmen and sophomores (Barker, 1981; Bartsch & Hackett, 1979; Cochran, et al., 1980; Smith, 1981), and with

upper-level college students (Ware & Beischel, 1979). A growing body of literature indicates that many upper-level college students who profited from programs in career development early in their college career were prepared to meet the challenges that await beyond graduation.

References

Barker, S. B. (1981). An evaluation of the effectiveness of a college career course. Journal of College Student Personnel, 22, 354-358.

Bartsch, K., & Hackett, G. (1979). Effect of a decision-making course on locus of control., conceptualization, and career planning. Journal of College Student Personnel, 20, 230-235.

Cochran, D., Hetherington C., & Strand, K. H. (1980). Career choice class: Caviar or caveat. Journal of College Student Personnel, 21, 402-406.

Hutt, C. H. (1983). College students' perceptions of male and female career patterns. Journal of College Student Personnel, 24, 240-246.

Keller, J. W., Mayfield, M., & Piotrowski. C. (1983). Career and life planning: A process approach. Canadian Vocational Journal, 19, 12-13.

Smith, G. E. (1981). The effectiveness of a career guidance class: An organizational comparison. Journal of College Student Personnel, 22, 120-124.

Ware, M. E., & Beischel, M. L. (1979). Career development: Evaluating a new frontier for teaching and research. Teaching of Psychology, 6, 210-213.

Ware, M. E., & Millard, R. J. (1986). Handbook of student development. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Yanico, B. J. (1982). Androgyny and occupational sex-stereotyping of college students. Psychological Reports, 50, 875-878.

Table I

Major Dimensions Assessed on Student (N = 200) Course Evaluations

	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
1. This course has increase my knowledge about student skills such as time management and study methods.	68.6	16.9	14.5
2. I wanted to take this course.	15.8	55.8	28.4
3. I acquired new knowledge about careers through this course.	67.8	17.3	14.9
4. I participated in class discussions.	70.2	14.9	14.9
5. I acquired new knowledge about career planning theories and issues through this course.	63.1	12.6	24.3
6. I try to relate what I am learning in this course to my own experiences.	76.2	9.2	14.6
7. I acquired new knowledge about life-span issues in this course.	64.0	14.4	21.6
8. This course has increased my self-understanding.	60.0	16.9	23.1
9. I am learning to think more clearly about career and life planning.	62.6	17.5	19.9
10. I find the learning opportunities provided in the course to be useful.	56.5	19.8	23.7
11. This course has increased my interest in further exploring career information.	59.4	19.3	21.3
12. I have created learning experiences for myself in connection with this course.	47.6	22.8	29.6

NOTE: Magnitudes are presented as percentages.